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S E C R E T AMMAN 000143

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL TU IZ JO

SUBJECT: TURKISH PM GUL'S JANUARY 6 VISIT: IN PUBLIC
STATEMENTS BOTH SIDES STRESS NEED TO AVERT WAR, MAINTAIN
IRAQI TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm. Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

¶1. (U) Turkish Prime Minister Abdullah Gul met with King Abdullah and Jordanian PM Ali Abul Ragheb January 6 in Amman, in the third stop of Gul's trip through the region. The visit was given prominent above-the-fold coverage in all of the Kingdom's Arabic and English dailies. Press accounts, quoting generously from PM Abul Ragheb, stressed the two countries' agreement to "speed up efforts to peacefully resolve the deadlock between Iraq and the U.S., avoiding a war in the region." A one-page official statement noted that the two sides had agreed that "all efforts exerted to resolve the crisis should be made under the umbrella of the UN."

¶2. (U) Following his meeting with PM Abul Ragheb, Gul held a press conference in which he stated: "All our efforts are being made to prevent a war from erupting in the region whose repercussion would be very dramatic." He added that "the official policy of the Turkish Republic is to preserve the unity of Iraq's territory and that the entire Iraqi people benefit from the riches of Iraq." The official Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted PM Abul Ragheb as saying that any military action would have "very negative consequences on regional peace, security and economy." The Jordanian PM, according to Petra, also reiterated "the Kingdom's position rejecting the use of its territories and airspace in any 'aggression' against Iraq."

¶3. (S) As reported separately, the King was much more constructive in his private remarks to his Turkish visitor than Jordan's public statements would indicate. The Jordanian government is clearly still wary of moving away from its longstanding public position, which unsurprisingly shows considerable deference to widespread opposition among Jordanians to conflict with Iraq.

GNEHM